



Volunteer Today *Fall-Winter 2002*



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What It Means To Be A Volunteer In A Correctional System

*Steve Schwalb, Assistant Director
Industries, Education and Vocational Training Division*

In the spirit of Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, this edition of *Volunteer Today* will demonstrate the diversity of volunteer and citizen participation available to staff, inmates, and citizens within the Bureau of Prisons.

With the anniversary of 9/11 now past, and with the uncertainty of foreign relationships, many American citizens are concerned about the days ahead. Concerns range from the possibility of war to the ever-looming thoughts of terrorism on United States soil. Even with these issues at the forefront, our President continues to emphasize the need for all Americans to identify any number of ways to contribute time and service as responsible citizens. As a nation, we have responded in overwhelming numbers.

Over this past year, we have clearly seen how volunteerism has been used to make a difference. So many fellow Americans unselfishly give of themselves as volunteers.

Pursuant to this, the Industries, Education and Vocational Training Division (IE&VT) is continuously exploring new ideas with innovative and measurable outcomes that will provide offenders with the opportunity to engage in meaningful work. Our mission does not stop there. It is also the Bureau of Prisons' mission to see confinement as a means to provide self-improvement opportunities to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens.

As more and more persons across the country respond to the call to action under initiatives such as USA Freedom Corps, the Bureau is currently looking at ways to further engage offenders in worthwhile projects. Among our goals is to extend our local public works partnerships to a broader national level. Over the years, we have valued our public works

partnerships with the National Guard, the National Park Service, and other Federal agencies.

We also want to expand opportunities for offenders to participate in community service activities. The Bureau supports partnerships with local government agencies and nonprofit charitable organizations that allow offenders to volunteer for the public good. These community service projects do not displace regular employees, nor do they supplant employment opportunities that would normally be available within the sponsoring organization, or impair contracts for service. Through these efforts, offenders have an opportunity to reconnect with society through positive experiences.

A wonderful example is a regional partnership with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. An award-winning program, *Building Homes: Rebuilding Lives* is a collaboration between Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, Habitat for Humanity International, state corrections, and two of our Federal facilities, the United States Penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, and the Federal Correctional Institution in Greenville, Illinois. Through this partnership, inmates may enroll in construction trade classes to learn to build wall panels, trusses, and other housing components inside the prisons. These components are then taken out of the prisons to community building sites, where Habitat for Humanity or other not-for-profit groups build houses for low-income families.

Measurable outcomes of this community service project include:

- Teaching inmates marketable skills that will translate into sustainable employment.
- Building good and affordable housing for low-income families.
- Linking inmates with a positive organization that has potential to provide them with meaningful construction experience while they are looking for employment after release.
- Providing inmates with the experience of doing something worthwhile for society.
- Demonstrating to potential employers that inmate participants have learned job skills and personal habits that make them potential employees.
- Breaking down barriers of prejudice against prisoners by helping them establish positive relationships with members of the community.

Since *Building Homes: Rebuilding Lives* began in 1995, Illinois prisoner partners, including state correctional facilities, have helped to build 194 homes, 86 of which have been built by incarcerated juveniles.

We urge you to consider working with us in maximizing such opportunities to serve our country through volunteer and community service efforts.

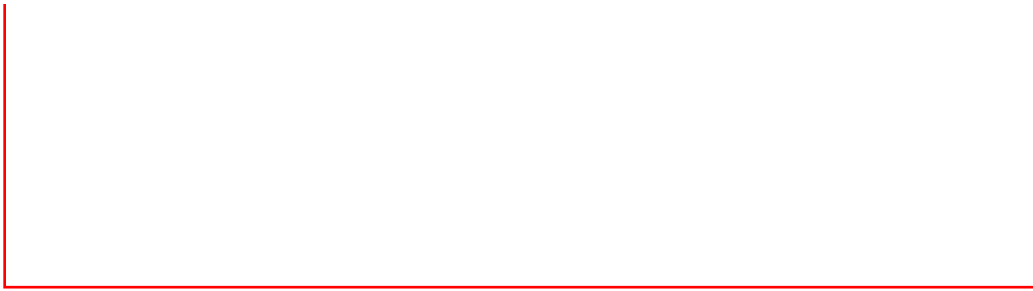
**Making Time Count:
volunteerism is everybody's
business**

*Alice DavisJohnson, Administrator
Volunteer Management Branch*

Each year, the Attorney General recognizes outstanding work in the areas of community service by staff of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and by citizens who volunteer at a DOJ component. Nominations are provided to DOJ from each of the components, but only one person or group is chosen in each category. Since 1994, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is pleased to have had nine nominees selected from those submitted. For 2002, we are pleased to recognize the volunteer contributions of Mrs. Carolyn Williams, a volunteer at the Federal Prison Camp (FPC) in Alderson, West Virginia.

Mrs. Williams, founder of the Daughters of the Covenant Ministry, has served as a volunteer at FPC Alderson for 25 years. Mrs. Williams received the FPC Alderson 2001 Volunteer of the Year Award, as a result of her dedication and compassion to serve and assist in meeting the spiritual needs of the incarcerated. She has also assisted chaplains at the prison in conducting services.

*Attorney General John Ashcroft
(left) and Director of the
Federal Bureau of Prisons
Kathleen Hawk Sawyer (right)
join in congratulating Mrs.
Carolyn Williams (center) as the
Department of Justice recipient
of the Attorney General's
Citizen Service Award.*



Mrs. Williams' desire to reach all ethnic groups within the prison system is reflected in the diversity of volunteers from the Daughters of the Covenant Ministry Team.

The composition of her Christian ministry team consists of male and females, Native American, Asian-Pacific, and African American volunteers. Because of Mrs. Williams' bilingual skills, she leads bible studies for women who are Latin American and Messianic Jews. In addition, for 25 years, she has held monthly worship services. Mrs. Williams has struggled with her health and her daughter's diagnosis of cancer for the past two years, yet she remains faithful to her call to prison ministry.

In June 2001, Ms. Williams coordinated and directed a conference entitled, "Treasures in Earthen Vessels." The goal of this conference was to emphasize the importance of opening the doors to volunteer ministries. It emphasized the positive impact that it makes on the inmate population in reducing the rate of recidivism. Throughout the conference, Ms. Williams honored incarcerated men and women who made a positive choice and change in their lives. Representatives from the West Virginia State Department of Corrections, employees, and volunteers from FPC Alderson attended the conference. This year, she will present the second Treasures in Earthen Vessels Prison Conference. She is an inspiration for bridging the gap for inmates back into society.

Mrs. Williams' volunteerism is not exclusive to Alderson. She also volunteers in four state correctional facilities, a total of two Federal facilities, and at the Southern Regional Jail in Beckley, West Virginia. She has truly attempted to meet the spiritual needs of both state and Federal inmates. She not only reaches out to the incarcerated, but makes a difference in the lives and future of prison inmates and their families. Despite her adversities, Mrs. Williams' faith is an example of strength and hope to the hundreds of offenders.

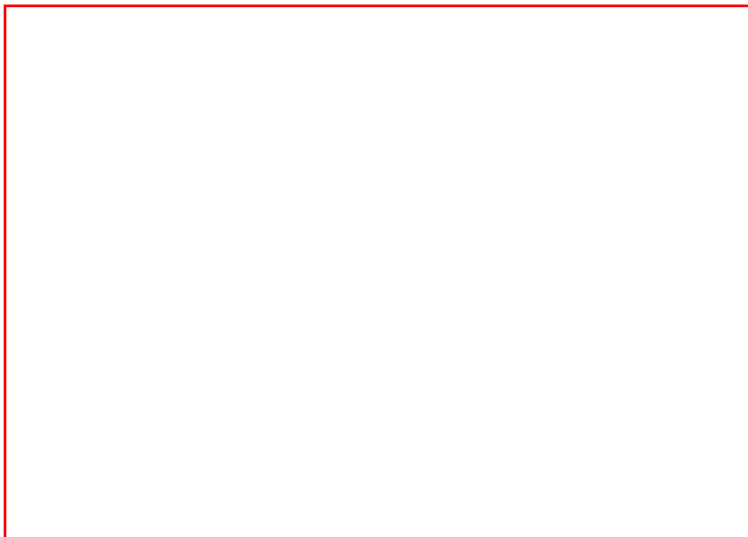
Kids' Day: Youth Engaged in Justice



Beginning in the Spring, a level of excitement begins within the Central Office of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The excitement is generated by parents who begin to ponder and plan a day of education and enrichment for their children and those of their colleagues. The event is called Kids' Day at the BOP and at the Department of Justice (DOJ). The day each year is one of several events coordinated by the Central Office Volunteer Committee (COVC). Kids' Day is an example of the collective ideas and cooperation of each of the disciplines represented at BOP headquarters. The 2002 event was chaired by Michael Eason, Special Events Coordinator for the COVC.

On August 19, 2002, close to 100 youth assembled at the BOP to experience the environment and responsibilities of their parents.

The annual event by DOJ offers activities such as mock court trials, demonstrations by the Border Patrol, and state of the art technology. It also includes a tour of the Federal Bureau of Investigations. These programs promote opportunities for children to learn about the justice system and consider employment in one of thousands of positions.



Youth were given an opportunity to witness the use of robot technology as a tool in the justice system.

During the first half of the day, children of staff from each component (FBI, Bureau of Prisons, Border Patrol, Immigration and Naturalization, etc.) assemble at the Department to learn about the broad mission of the federal justice system. During the second half, the youth participate in component-sponsored activities, including job shadowing, experiential learning demonstrations by various branches, and enrichment activities for motivation and enjoyment.

Staff of the agency serve as tour leaders and planners to engage youth aged seven to early teens. The event is clearly one which promotes intergenerational learning and career inspiration.

Chicago Has Lots of Drama

Lonnie McDade

Institution Volunteer Coordinator

For the last three years, the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Chicago, Illinois (MCC Chicago) has had a partnership with the Still Point Theatre Collective. Two of the organization's volunteers, Ms. Lisa Wagner and Mrs. Kelly Corcoran, have committed themselves to providing a nine-week drama workshop for 11 female offenders. Still Point Theatre Collective is a performing arts ministry based in Chicago. It is a nonprofit, nationally touring theatre company, which produces work focused on social justice and journeys of faith.

Often, offenders who participate in the program have had no previous experience in the dramatic arts. After the nine-week workshop, the offenders present their skit to staff and other volunteers in the institution. Utilizing creative writing and improvisational acting techniques, the class provides a means by which the women can perform a variety of activities. They tell stories, write dramatic pieces, and perform in a theatrical work. The class provides an outlet for expression as well as building trust and self-confidence and helping to develop theatrical skills that could be used for employment upon release.

The program has been an inspiring tool for raising enthusiasm among the women and for helping them to discover latent talents.

Spoken Like A True Volunteer

Federal Medical Center (FMC) Carswell, Texas

Dear Readers,

I'd like to take this time to share my experiences as a volunteer within the Federal prison system.

Three years ago, a friend of mine, Julia Stokes, asked if I would like to volunteer at a local women's prison. She worked as a social worker in the Psychology Services Department of FMC Carswell. At the time, I was enrolled in school and could not work full time, so I elected to take her up on her offer. I thought this would be a great opportunity to gain some experience in my chosen field.

FMC Carswell is a medical center and camp which houses women.

I was not affiliated with any "group" at the time. I acted upon my own willingness. I was pursuing a degree though, and ultimately, here I was - a student volunteer at FMC Carswell.

From the first day, I loved it. The staff were so nice and very helpful. Everyone told me how much they appreciated my volunteer work. At the time, I didn't know what I could possibly do at a prison. It didn't take long before that was no longer a problem. The staff provided many opportunities for me to learn.

After being there for a while, I was asked if I could conduct a group for psychology services. Dr. Kristin Batchelder, Staff Psychologist, was very open to providing the opportunity. One group led to another, and another. After 18 months of volunteer work, I was required by my university to begin my practicum hours. I asked Dr. Batchelder if I would be able to do my practicum work at FMC Carswell. Dr. Batchelder and the other staff members were helpful in coordinating the requirements from my university with my role as a volunteer at Carswell.

One of several specific projects I did was a literature club group with Robert Honshtein, the activity therapist. I conducted several group meetings to include classes for the inmates in Anger Management, Depression, Communication Skills, and Victim Impact. I was also given the opportunity to do some assessments and individual counseling. I received the best possible experience I could ever hope for.

I loved working with the women and thinking that maybe I could make a difference in one of their lives. Many of them are so receptive to what I have to offer. It makes me feel like I am doing something great when they (the inmates) tell me how much they enjoy my classes.

When I started volunteering three years ago, I met an inmate whose circumstances touched my heart. She joined one of my classes one afternoon because one of her friends had told her how much she had enjoyed it. She continued to come every week, and before long, we began to converse several times a week during my volunteer hours at the prison. Several staff

members indicated to me how good they felt about this interaction. They indicated that they felt it was great for her to have someone like me to take time to share with her. As the months turned to years, I saw a dramatic change in this woman's attitude and persona. My most fulfilling experience was the day she told me how much I had helped her to see things differently, and how much it meant to her that I spent the time to really get to know her. Being able to make a difference in someone's life, particularly that of an inmate, warmed my heart.

My experiences while volunteering at FMC Carswell opened the door for great employment opportunities. If I had not volunteered at FMC Carswell, I would not have gained the experience I needed to get the job I now have with Tarrant County as a Community Supervision Officer.

Although I was not paid for my volunteer time at the institution, the experience I received was invaluable. I put this experience down on my applications as unpaid work experience as well as community involvement. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to touch lives and give back to my community.

Linda Collins
FMC Carswell Volunteer